Ladies and gentlemen:

My topic today is “transcendental analysis and dialectical synthesis,” following the ideas of “transcendental analysis” in Kantian philosophy and “dialectical synthesis” in Hegel. These are both major themes in philosophy, which I will only be able to treat briefly in the course of this lecture, particularly because my health has been poor of late and I have only just returned home to convalesce after a two-month stay in the hospital.

The first thing to understand is that the Hegelian notion of dialectical synthesis presupposes Kant’s transcendental analysis. Each of Kant’s *Critiques* is divided into a part on “analytic” and a part on “dialectic.” However, Kant is using ‘dialectic’ in the classical sense it had had ever since the Greeks. With Hegel, that word took on a new and much different meaning. Dialectic in the classical sense was guided by logic and hence the so-called dialectical process was subject to logical examination. Thus there might be superficial antinomies, but it did not allow true contradictions. Either the two propositions were both false or they could coexist. But in Hegel’s dialectical method, it was necessary to go through contradiction to reach a higher state. Discovering “dialectic” in this sense was Hegel’s great contribution. However, this was only a contribution in the context of Western philosophy; for Chinese philosophy already understood this sort of thing on a high level. It was merely that China did not use these terms for it and had not laid it out theoretically. Its most prolific theorists in this respect were Daoism and Buddhism, and indeed Confucianism contained this sort of understanding as well, even though it did not like to talk about it. What I would like to do today is to point out that even though China’s Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism *can* talk about dialectics in this sense, nevertheless their dialectics is completely different from Hegel’s dialectics.

Talking about dialectical synthesis presupposes Kant’s critical analysis (*pipan fenjie* 批判分解), which is the most difficult part of Western philoso-

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Transcendental Analysis and Dialectical Synthesis

What modern people call “analysis” is mostly the so-called logical analysis that is descended from Leibniz and Russell, which is very easy. But what is entailed in understanding dialectical synthesis is not logical analysis but analysis in the Kantian sense. Taking what is analyzed in the course of transcendental analysis and synthesizing it all together through a dialectical process and thus arriving at complete integration (quanbu de da ronghe 全部的大融合) is what is called “dialectical synthesis.”

In Chinese tradition, “dialectics” always presupposes a distinction between “spiritual cultivation” (gongfu 工夫)\(^2\) and being-in-itself (benti 本體). As expressed in Kant’s philosophy, what is called “being-in-itself” here is the ideas of freedom of the will, immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. These three ideas (linian 理念) of Kant’s, looked at from the perspective of speculative reason or theoretical reason, are all empty concepts. That is, they are just concepts supplied by reason. That is something different from concepts supplied by the understanding, i.e. categories. In the speculative sense, ideas can only be “regulative principles,” not “constitutive principles.” Kant pays careful attention to this distinction, and it is only after understanding these two terms that one can truly understand the refinement of Kant’s philosophy. In Kant’s first Critique, he believes that since these three ideas cannot be constitutive, they should be described as “transcendent” (chaoyue 超越), not as “transcendental” (chaoyue 超越). “Transcendent” is contrasted with “immanent.” Those two words originally come from Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s “Ideas” as transcendent rather than immanent, but the “ideas” that Kant is talking about (concepts of reason) are different from Plato’s “Ideas,” which are Forms. These three ideas of Kant’s are transcendent from the perspective of speculative reason, but in terms of practical reason, they can become immanent. That is, they can become concrete. Thus concepts which in speculative terms are transcendent, regulative, and negative can take on immanent, constitutive, and real significance in practice.

A little explanation is in order about what “immanent, constitutive significance” means. In Kant’s thought, the three ideas are able to become immanent and constitutive because of what in the third Critique is called “reflective judgment” (fanxing panduan 反省判斷). Here the idea of God’s existence can give rise to a “moral theology,” which is to say a moral proof of the existence of God. Since the Western tradition is a Christian one, Kant first proposes a “moral theology.” Moreover, he can only acknowledge a “moral theology,” not a

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\(^2\) In this essay, gongfu is translated as “spiritual cultivation,” “spiritual effort,” or simply “effort.”